

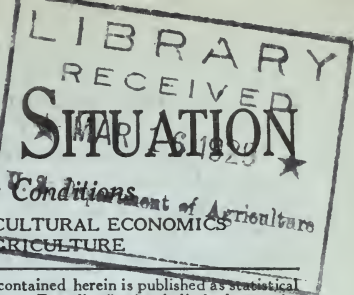
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THE AGRICULTURAL SITUATION

A Brief Summary of Economic Conditions of Agriculture

ISSUED MONTHLY BY THE BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



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BACKWARD SPRING—VARIED MARKET SITUATION

Whatever the growing season may develop hereafter, it is not making a very early start. In fact, winter still lingers throughout much of the North and West, and it has been a real winter. During the past month, snow and cold waves have harassed the whole North, including especially the livestock industries of the western range country, and have damaged winter crops in the South and on the Pacific coast. Preparations for spring work are decidedly backward even in the South (excepting Florida) where heavy rains and cold weather have hindered either field work or crop growth. All told, it looks like a backward start for the great press of spring work.

On the other hand, in Florida as in the extreme Southwest, the season for early truck crops has opened up with heavier shipments than last spring. An increasing volume of strawberries, citrus fruits, celery, carrots, spinach, and potatoes moved to market last month. In fact, the country-wide car-lot movement of 22 important vegetables and fruits was about 7,000 cars more, or one-fourth greater, this February than last.

The past month marked further improvement in wheat prices, especially of the hard wheats. This seems to have been due to the gradual realization that the year's crop is being used up rather rapidly. Shipments of wheat, from the principal exporting countries, since July 1 have been around 90,000,000 bushels more than during the same period last season. Europe was short of grain and wheat has been a good buy, hence the importing countries have taken considerably more than a year ago. The market now is bound to be sensitive to reports of weather damage to the growing crop, since the winter has been severe in Europe as well as here.

In the winter livestock markets, lamb feeders have been doing about as well as anybody. Lamb prices the latter part of February were well above a year ago. The presumption is that with Corn Belt lambs pretty well cleaned out, with only a few more lambs than last year in western feeding areas, and with the present strong consumer demand for lamb, the situation will continue favorable to feeders through this feeding season.

Prices of beef steers in recent weeks have run around \$1.50 per hundredweight below a year ago. The production of dressed beef in January exceeded December for the first time in five years and was about 9 per cent more than a year ago. The temporarily large supply of steers is the result of the numbers put on feed early last summer. However, the explanation for the lower prices of beef steers may also be partly on the consumer end.

The hog market has been advancing since mid-December. This is a natural trend at this time of year, but the strength of the market this winter, in spite of fairly heavy runs of hogs, is encouraging to producers. Hog prices lately have been running from \$1 to \$2 per hundredweight higher than a year ago.

AVERAGE PRICES OF FARM PRODUCTS RECEIVED BY PRODUCERS

Actual prices received by producers at local farm markets as reported to the division of crop and livestock estimates of this bureau. Average of reports covering the United States, weighted according to relative importance of district and State.

	5-year average, August, 1909- July, 1914	Janu- ary average 1910- 1914	Janu- ary, 1928	Decem- ber, 1928	Janu- ary, 1929
Cotton, per pound.....cents..	12. 4	12. 2	18. 6	18. 0	17. 9
Corn, per bushel.....do.....	64. 2	58. 9	75. 2	76. 1	80. 2
Wheat, per bushel.....do.....	88. 4	88. 4	115. 2	98. 2	98. 5
Hay, per ton.....dollars.....	11. 87	11. 87	10. 60	11. 23	11. 61
Potatoes, per bushel.....cents..	69. 7	64. 2	93. 6	57. 7	58. 9
Oats, per bushel.....do.....	39. 9	39. 0	49. 3	42. 5	43. 7
Beef cattle, per 100 poundsdollars.....	5. 22	5. 04	8. 48	8. 94	8. 97
Hogs, per 100 pounds.....do.....	7. 23	7. 03	7. 81	7. 93	8. 18
Eggs, per dozen.....cents.....	21. 5	27. 9	38. 2	42. 9	33. 0
Butter, per pound.....do.....	25. 5	27. 8	45. 2	46. 3	45. 3
Butterfat, per pound.....do.....	17. 7	18. 5	48. 5	49. 2	47. 6
Wool, per pound.....do.....	17. 7	18. 5	33. 2	35. 6	35. 9
Veal calves, per 100 poundsdollars.....	6. 75	6. 78	10. 88	11. 82	12. 20
Lambs, per 100 pounds.....do.....	5. 91	5. 79	11. 34	11. 41	12. 23
Horses, each.....do.....	142. 00	139. 00	77. 00	78. 00	77. 00

The farm price of horses on January 15 was the same as a year ago while the farm price of mules was \$2 per head higher than in January, 1928. Numbers of horses and mules on farms declined from 19,987,000 on January 1, 1928, to 19,476,000 head on January 1, 1929.

The farm price of corn made a sharp advance of about 5 per cent from December 15 to January 15. The advance has been accompanied by indications of a continued high export demand due to reports of unfavorable growing conditions in Argentina. Farm stocks of corn on January 1, were slightly less than a year ago.

The farm price of wheat on January 15 showed little change from the month previous. The farm price failed to show the usual seasonal rise during this period and remained about 15 per cent below last years' wheat prices due to the larger world crop in 1928, the relatively large visible supply in the United States at this time, and indications that with average abandonment, the 1929 winter wheat crop will be practically as big as the crop in 1928.

The farm price of potatoes advanced approximately 2 per cent from December 15 to January 15. The price advance was accompanied by indications that farmers intend to plant a decidedly reduced acreage in potatoes this year, especially in the early producing States.

PRICE INDEXES FOR JANUARY, 1929

Farm products figures from this bureau; commodity groups from Bureau of Labor statistics (latter shown to nearest whole number). Shows year ago and latest available month.

FARM PRODUCTS

[Prices at the farm; August, 1909–July, 1914=100]

	January, 1928	December, 1928	January, 1929	Month's trend
Cotton.....	150	145	144	Lower.
Corn.....	117	119	125	Higher.
Wheat.....	130	111	111	Unchanged.
Hay.....	89	95	98	Higher.
Potatoes.....	134	83	84	Do.
Beef cattle.....	163	172	172	Unchanged.
Hogs.....	108	110	113	Higher.
Eggs.....	178	200	153	Lower.
Butter.....	177	182	178	Do.
Wool.....	187	200	202	Higher.

COMMODITY GROUPS

[Wholesale prices; 1926=100]

	January, 1928	December, 1928	January, 1929	Month's trend
Farm products.....	106	104	106	Higher.
Foods.....	98	98	99	Do.
Hides and leather products.....	121	116	114	Lower.
Textile products.....	97	96	96	Unchanged.
Fuel and lighting.....	81	84	82	Lower.
Metals and metal products.....	98	103	104	Higher.
Building materials.....	91	97	97	Unchanged.
Chemicals and drugs.....	96	96	96	Do.
House-furnishing goods.....	99	96	97	Higher.
All commodities.....	96	97	97	Unchanged.

GENERAL TREND OF PRICES AND WAGES

[1910-1914=100]

Year and month	Whole-sale prices of all commodities ¹	Industrial wages ²	Prices paid by farmers for commodities used in—			Farm wages	Taxes ³
			Living	Pro-duction	Living pro-duction		
1910.....	103	-----	98	98	98	97	-----
1911.....	95	-----	100	103	101	97	-----
1912.....	101	-----	101	98	100	101	-----
1913.....	102	-----	100	102	100	104	-----
1914.....	100	-----	102	99	101	101	100
1915.....	103	101	107	103	106	102	102
1916.....	129	114	125	121	123	112	104
1917.....	180	129	148	152	150	140	106
1918.....	198	160	180	176	178	176	118
1919.....	210	185	214	192	205	206	130
1920.....	230	222	227	175	206	239	155
1921.....	150	203	165	142	156	150	217
1922.....	152	197	160	140	152	146	232
1923.....	156	214	161	142	153	166	246
1924.....	152	218	162	143	154	166	249
1925.....	162	223	165	149	159	168	250
1926.....	154	229	164	144	156	171	253
1927.....	149	231	161	144	154	170	-----
1928.....	153	232	-----	-----	-----	169	-----
January—							
1921.....	173	217	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
1922.....	141	192	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
1923.....	159	206	158	138	150	137	-----
1924.....	154	219	163	141	154	159	-----
1925.....	163	223	164	149	158	156	-----
1926.....	159	229	165	145	157	159	-----
1927.....	150	232	-----	-----	-----	162	-----
1928.....	151	230	-----	-----	-----	161	-----
1928							
June.....	153	232	163	148	157	-----	-----
July.....	154	230	-----	-----	-----	170	-----
August.....	155	231	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
September.....	157	234	163	144	156	-----	-----
October.....	153	234	-----	-----	-----	175	-----
November.....	151	233	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
December.....	151	237	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
1929							
January.....	152	234	-----	-----	-----	162	-----

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics. Index for 1928 obtained by multiplying new series by 156.6.

² Average weekly earnings, New York State factories. June, 1914=100.

³ Index of estimate of total taxes paid on all farm property. 1914=100.

GENERAL TREND OF PRICES AND PURCHASING POWER

[On 5-year base; August, 1909=July, 1914=100]

Year and month	Index numbers of farm prices							Prices paid by farmers for commodities bought ¹	Ratio of prices received to prices paid
	Grains	Fruits and vegetables	Meat animals	Dairy products	Poultry products	Cotton and cottonseed	All groups, 30 items		
1910.....	104	91	103	100	104	113	103	98	106
1911.....	96	106	87	97	91	101	95	101	93
1912.....	106	110	95	103	101	87	99	100	99
1913.....	92	92	108	100	101	97	100	100	99
1914.....	103	100	112	100	105	85	102	101	101
1915.....	120	83	104	98	103	78	100	106	95
1916.....	126	123	120	102	116	119	117	123	95
1917.....	217	202	173	125	157	187	176	150	118
1918.....	226	162	202	152	185	245	200	178	112
1919.....	231	189	206	173	206	247	209	205	102
1920.....	231	249	173	188	222	248	205	206	99
1921.....	112	148	108	148	161	101	116	156	75
1922.....	105	152	113	134	139	156	124	152	81
1923.....	114	136	106	148	145	216	135	153	88
1924.....	129	124	109	134	147	211	134	154	87
1925.....	156	160	139	137	161	177	147	159	92
1926.....	129	189	146	136	156	122	136	156	87
1927.....	128	155	139	138	141	128	131	154	85
1928.....	130	146	150	140	150	152	139	-----	-----
January—									
1921.....	138	136	123	172	243	93	135	-----	-----
1922.....	91	159	95	140	176	129	114	-----	-----
1923.....	113	117	110	151	175	203	134	150	89
1924.....	110	118	101	152	162	255	137	154	89
1925.....	172	122	123	134	213	182	146	158	92
1926.....	143	214	140	147	172	138	143	157	91
1927.....	120	140	140	144	173	85	126	154	82
1928.....	125	144	138	145	177	152	137	154	89
1928									
June.....	152	168	150	134	127	162	145	157	92
July.....	142	156	157	134	134	170	145	(156)	93
August.....	120	137	162	135	140	153	139	(156)	89
September.....	117	127	174	141	156	142	141	156	91
October.....	116	114	160	143	168	147	137	² 156	² 88
November.....	110	109	150	144	185	146	134	² 156	² 86
December.....	112	108	143	146	197	148	134	² 156	² 86
1929									
January.....	115	109	146	145	161	148	133	² 156	² 86

¹ These index numbers are based on retail prices paid by farmers for commodities used in living and production, reported quarterly for March, June, September, and December. The indexes for other months are straight interpolations between the successive quarterly indexes.

² Preliminary.

THE TREND OF MOVEMENT TO MARKET

Figures show wheat, corn, hogs, cattle, sheep receipts at primary markets; butter receipts at five markets, compiled by this bureau.

Year and month	Receipts					
	Wheat	Corn	Hogs	Cattle	Sheep	Butter
Total—	<i>1,000 bushels</i>	<i>1,000 bushels</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>1,000</i>	<i>1,000 pounds</i>
1920.....	332,314	210,332	42,121	22,197	23,538	402,755
1921.....	435,606	340,908	41,101	19,787	24,168	468,150
1922.....	413,106	378,598	44,068	23,218	22,364	526,714
1923.....	386,430	271,858	55,330	23,211	22,025	545,380
1924.....	482,007	278,719	55,414	23,695	22,201	587,477
1925.....	346,381	223,604	43,929	24,067	22,100	574,489
1926.....	362,876	234,873	39,772	23,872	23,868	572,935
1927.....	455,991	241,245	41,411	22,763	23,935	581,592
1928.....	495,450	335,149	46,527	21,477	25,597	578,845
January—						
1920.....	22,697	20,623	5,262	1,881	1,614	24,692
1921.....	30,393	39,991	4,700	1,644	1,792	25,482
1922.....	17,911	46,537	4,278	1,628	1,835	34,624
1923.....	38,002	37,526	5,306	1,876	1,636	40,304
1924.....	15,548	30,594	6,253	1,888	1,697	37,451
1925.....	23,247	35,820	6,105	1,869	1,467	37,781
1926.....	19,076	28,268	4,304	1,840	1,548	39,424
1927.....	19,379	23,658	4,252	1,832	1,740	37,705
1928.....	22,313	37,116	5,306	1,771	1,705	42,271
1928						
February.....	21,403	44,453	5,267	1,516	1,669	41,140
March.....	24,639	39,520	4,639	1,465	1,520	45,748
April.....	17,483	19,724	3,483	1,684	1,591	44,721
May.....	24,718	23,289	3,723	1,799	1,952	54,427
June.....	13,883	18,345	3,548	1,558	1,913	69,650
July.....	64,846	24,535	2,924	1,650	1,898	65,145
August.....	78,372	20,485	2,523	1,829	2,362	55,339
September.....	72,579	19,608	2,600	2,191	3,386	44,969
October.....	82,346	15,305	3,666	2,541	3,938	41,884
November.....	40,901	28,641	4,075	1,963	2,053	36,616
December.....	31,967	44,128	4,773	1,510	1,610	36,863
1929						
January.....	21,307	37,993	5,061	1,635	1,876	44,922

The January movement of wheat and corn to market was not unlike that in the same month last year. Receipts of hogs and cattle were slightly below a year ago, whereas more sheep and lambs and more butter moved to market.

THE TREND OF EXPORT MOVEMENT

Compiled from the Department of Commerce reports by division of statistical research of this bureau.

Year and month	Wheat, including flour ¹	Tobacco (leaf)	Bacon, hams, and shoulders ²	Lard	Total meats ³	Cot- ton run- ning bales ⁴
	<i>1,000 bushels</i>	<i>1,000 pounds</i>	<i>1,000 pounds</i>	<i>1,000 pounds</i>	<i>1,000 pounds</i>	<i>1,000 bales</i>
Total—						
1920-----	311, 601	467, 662	821, 922	612, 250	1, 043, 500	6, 111
1921-----	359, 021	515, 353	647, 680	868, 942	786, 280	6, 385
1922-----	235, 307	430, 908	631, 452	766, 950	733, 832	6, 015
1923-----	175, 190	474, 500	828, 890	1, 035, 382	958, 472	5, 224
1924-----	241, 454	546, 555	637, 980	944, 095	729, 832	6, 653
1925-----	138, 784	468, 471	467, 459	688, 829	547, 361	8, 362
1926-----	193, 971	478, 773	351, 591	698, 961	428, 613	8, 916
1927-----	228, 576	506, 252	237, 720	681, 303	302, 795	9, 199
1928-----	151, 976	575, 408	248, 278	759, 722	315, 586	8, 546
January—						
1920-----	12, 358	46, 757	91, 407	38, 824	123, 929	922
1921-----	27, 361	46, 852	60, 072	76, 185	90, 800	600
1922-----	15, 231	32, 265	48, 120	73, 194	55, 777	459
1923-----	12, 751	41, 309	74, 432	107, 786	86, 938	471
1924-----	12, 486	47, 579	79, 067	132, 758	90, 429	540
1925-----	13, 126	35, 448	56, 169	78, 440	65, 705	1, 052
1926-----	5, 587	46, 891	46, 654	76, 670	53, 833	735
1927-----	12, 821	66, 403	20, 597	59, 842	25, 748	1, 074
1928-----	11, 809	42, 600	22, 212	70, 660	27, 102	712
1928						
February-----	6, 725	41, 355	22, 175	79, 872	27, 850	614
March-----	7, 492	45, 957	28, 016	79, 929	34, 666	596
April-----	7, 880	41, 218	22, 074	56, 554	28, 607	467
May-----	8, 793	38, 726	21, 711	55, 540	28, 148	578
June-----	8, 230	30, 278	23, 850	53, 436	29, 014	444
July-----	7, 193	19, 417	25, 851	52, 940	31, 268	331
August-----	14, 775	26, 200	14, 913	50, 658	31, 300	253
September-----	22, 732	56, 953	13, 956	46, 158	18, 685	810
October-----	28, 548	88, 109	10, 055	59, 865	15, 724	1, 241
November-----	16, 195	77, 599	14, 710	67, 716	20, 287	1, 428
December-----	12, 053	67, 583	18, 885	86, 358	23, 040	1, 058
1929						
January-----	9, 833	44, 166	24, 669	89, 932	31, 684	-----

¹ Wheat flour is converted on a basis of 4.7 bushels of grain equal 1 barrel of flour.

² Includes Cumberland and Wiltshire sides.

³ Includes fresh, canned, and pickled beef; bacon, hams, and shoulders; fresh, canned, and pickled pork; fresh mutton and lamb.

⁴ Excludes linters.

GENERAL BUSINESS INDICATORS RELATED TO AGRICULTURE

	January, 1928	December, 1928	January, 1929	Month's trend
PRODUCTION				
Pig iron, daily (thousand tons).	93	109	111	Increase.
Bituminous coal (million tons).	44	43	51	Do.
Steel ingots (thousand long tons).	3, 991	¹ 4, 019	4, 489	Do.
CONSUMPTION				
Cotton, by mills (thousand bales).	586	534	668	Increase.
Unfilled orders, Steel Corporation (thousand tons).	4, 276	3, 977	4, 109	Do.
Building contracts in 27 Northeastern States (million dollars).	364	382	357	Decrease.
Hogs slaughtered (thousands)	3, 443	3, 230	3, 194	Do.
Cattle slaughtered (thousands).	1, 080	910	1, 057	Increase.
Sheep slaughtered (thousands).	994	917	1, 040	Do.
MOVEMENTS				
Bank clearings (New York) (billion dollars).	31	39	44	Increase.
Car loadings (thousands)---	3, 449	4, 414	3, 571	Decrease.
Mail-order sales (million dollars).	37	74	47	Do.
Employees, New York State factories (thousands).	457	472	469	Do.
Average price 25 industrial stocks (dollars).	242	287	344	Increase.
Interest rate (4-6 months' paper, New York) (per cent).	4	¹ 5. 38	5. 38	Unchanged.
Retail food price index (Department of Labor). ²	155	156	155	Decrease.
Wholesale price index (Department of Labor). ³	96	97	97	Unchanged.

¹ Revised.² 1913=100.³ 1926=100.

Data on this page, excepting livestock slaughter and price indexes, are from the "Survey of Current Business," Bureau of the Census, United States Department of Commerce.

COLD-STORAGE SITUATION

[February 1 holdings (shows nearest million; i. e., 000,000, omitted)]

Commodity	5-year aver- age	Year ago	Month ago	Febru- ary 1, 1929
Apples.....barrels..	7	5	9	7
Creamery butter.....pounds..	29	28	44	25
American cheese.....do.....	44	42	68	58
Case eggs.....cases..	¹ 288	26	1, 415	246
Total poultry.....pounds..	122	118	110	102
Total beef.....do.....	98	72	99	94
Total pork.....do.....	676	656	670	838
Lard.....do.....	77	84	85	142
Lamb and mutton, frozen.....do.....	3	4	6	4
Total meats.....do.....	850	796	857	1, 025

¹ 3 figures omitted.

Cold-storage stocks of apples were in excess of last year by about 1,500,000 barrels and the outmovement for January slightly over 2,000,000 barrels, as compared to 1,500,000 a year ago.

Creamery butter stocks were about 3,500,000 pounds less than last year and 4,500,000 below the 5-year average.

There was a heavy surplus of American cheese as compared to both a year ago and the 5-year average for the period. The excess above last year was 16,000,000 and above the 5-year average 14,000,000 pounds.

The seasonal low point of case eggs was reached with 246,000 cases on hand. This was slightly below the 5-year average but nearly 200,000 cases over a year ago.

With quite heavy reductions in frozen poultry during January the shortage in stocks was further increased. Holdings were nearly 16,000,000 pounds below a year ago and 19,000,000 less than the 5-year average.

The out-of-storage movement of frozen and cured beef was normal for the month, and although stocks were about 22,000,000 pounds in excess of February 1 a year ago, they were slightly less than the average.

There was an abnormal inmovement of pork during January. This amounted to 168,000,000 pounds as compared to 132,000,000 last year and a 5-year average of 111,000,000 pounds.

Lard also showed a heavy increase. This increase was nearly double that of January a year ago, and stocks on hand were nearly 58,000,000 heavier than last year and 65,000,000 heavier than the 5-year average.

WILLIAM BROXTON,
Cold Storage Section, B. A. E.

SUMMARY OF DAIRY STATISTICS

[Million pounds, 000,000 omitted]

ESTIMATED PRODUCTION

	January		
	1929	1928	Per cent change
Creamery butter.....	103	101	+1.7
Farm butter.....	35	36	-1.7
Total butter.....	138	137	+0.8
Cheese.....	22	24	-10.5
Condensed and evaporated milk.....	109	103	+5.8
Total milk equivalent.....	3,393	3,381	+0.4

APPARENT CONSUMPTION

[Including production, changes in stocks, and net imports or exports]

Butter.....	157	157	+0.5
Cheese.....	40	37	+7.8
Condensed and evaporated milk.....	122	118	+3.6
Total milk equivalent.....	4,013	3,958	+1.4

T. R. PIRTLE,
Division of Dairy and Poultry Products, B. A. E.

THE DAIRY SITUATION

February is usually one of those months of the year when some rather abrupt changes in butter prices may be expected, which changes may be up or down, or both ways. This February, however, gives promise of being an exception, for up to the time of this writing (February 25) prices have held within a range of 1 cent. Such a small variation as this is narrower even than can be expected in midsummer, when there is always a very marked tendency for prices to follow a steady course. As a matter of comparison, the range between high and low prices at New York in February of last year was 5 cents, and the average range during the past five years was over 4 cents. Thus, as the close of the 1928-29 season approaches, there seems to be a continuation of the more or less steady price situation which featured the earlier part of the season. It may be recalled, in passing, that the difference between high and low prices in the calendar year 1928, was but 8½ cents, compared with an average range of about 16 cents.

In spite of the foregoing, it is not to be assumed that there has been any general feeling of certainty in dairy markets the past month or two as to probable price trends. Nor is it to be assumed that the course which prices followed was generally anticipated. The feeling has been less unsettled, perhaps, than is usually the case at this season of the year, but there has, nevertheless, been quite a bit of speculation among operators as to what would happen from week to week. Even yet this uncertainty continues, for while we may recognize conditions this year which are distinctly different from other years, we can not get away from the fact that, at the best, February and March are both months which in the past have shown some very erratic price changes. In terms of averages, February has usually averaged about a cent less than January, but in some years the drop was considerably more, and in others there were substantial advances instead. This year the change will be about a cent advance. There has always been a marked downward tendency apparent by May 1, but there is an utter lack of uniformity in price changes between March 1 and that date.

There are various reasons why such conditions prevail at this particular season. In the first place, we are at this time of year winding up an old season, and a new season is ahead with all sorts of possibilities in store. There is always the desire to clean up on the old season before starting in on the new. Then, current production is a factor, for while we usually expect winter dairying to exert its influence along in December, the extent of the increase is more or less uncertain, depending upon weather, feed costs, and the prices of dairy products themselves. Other factors making for uncertainty are the storage situation and the foreign situation.

Coming to the immediate situation, the following are important facts. Winter production has been fairly heavy, and latest reports indicate that it is holding up well. The last estimate for the entire country covers January and indicates an increase in butter production of almost 2 per cent over January, 1928. There have been increases reported each succeeding month since August. Despite increased current supplies from this source, storage stocks have moved well, and the butter storage situation itself is generally regarded as satisfactory. Absence of imports has been an important factor. Some shipments arrived early in the winter, but no important quantities have arrived since. New York butter prices have been some 9 to 10 cents higher than foreign prices, along with which condition, however, is the fact that a 12 cent tariff duty is in effect. The cheese market is apparently recovering somewhat from the jolt of last month, when prices dropped to the lowest January level for some years. Canned milk markets are steady to firm, and fluid milk markets show no material change from the fairly favorable position of last month.

L. M. DAVIS,
Division of Dairy and Poultry Products, B. A. E.

THE EGG AND POULTRY MARKET SITUATION

[February, 1929]

The fresh-egg markets in February, although being subject to many fluctuations as expected at this season, have followed a somewhat unusual price trend. Ordinarily prices show a definite down-

ward tendency during February, and prices at the close are about 8 to 10 cents lower than at the opening of the month. This year the trend has been upward, and prices as late as February 23 were 6 to 7 cents higher than at the start of the month. Thus, while on February 1 prices were practically the same as a year earlier, by February 23 there was a margin of 18 cents in favor of 1929.

Obviously, this change has been due to the supply situation. Egg receipts in February have shown a marked decrease compared with a year ago. January receipts were about 5 per cent heavier than those for January, 1928, but, beginning late in January and continuing on through February, a marked shift in the opposite direction occurred. Up to the last week in February, receipts at the four markets were 36 per cent lighter than for the same period in February last year.

The causal factors of this marked change in the supply situation are not definitely seen. The possibility of the estimated smaller numbers of hens on farms, as compared with a year ago, being of much importance in this connection, must be minimized. If this was the important factor, it would be difficult to explain the fact that January receipts were heavier than in 1928, even granting that the receipts in January this year may have included somewhat more than the usual percentage of storage eggs. To some extent, the decreased February production may reflect decreased feeding in January on account of the rather uncertain markets which existed at that time. The only important factor left is that of weather, and it is generally thought that this has been the chief influence in this case. Severe cold weather and widespread heavy snowstorms have generally prevailed in many of the producing sections. Decreased production and traffic tie-ups, which result from this sort of weather, are certain to have a marked effect on market receipts.

The out-of-storage movement is practically over, and the interest on the market now looks ahead to the time when the in movement for the new season begins. It now appears that the production season has been retarded by the cold weather, and that, as a result, the time when prices reach a point low enough to interest prospective storers of eggs is expected to be later than usual by several weeks. By the end of February last year, eggs were beginning to move into storage. This year, February prices are prohibitive to egg-storage operations. It has been generally felt that egg prices will have to be at least as low as last year in order to induce an effective volume of storage demand, which means price declines to a point about 18 cents below the level prevailing at the time this report is written.

The situation on the poultry markets has not shown much change. Prices remain firm, and on all classes of poultry considerably higher than a year ago. In spite of these higher prices, consumption has been heavy, and this is regarded as evidence of increased demand.

Receipts of dressed poultry, at the four markets, in February have been about equal to or slightly heavier than those of February a year ago, while a material decrease is again seen in arrivals of live poultry at New York. Why live-poultry receipts should decrease while dressed receipts increase is difficult to explain. It may be partly due to dressed-poultry prices being more favorable to poultry shippers than live prices, although in the present situation live prices are also high. It may be partly due to the fact that demand for live poultry in the cities comes mainly from a part of the population which reacts

quickly to price changes, and to some extent to a general tendency for lessened demand for kosher-killed poultry.

Storage holdings are relatively light, a fact that adds to the strength of the poultry markets. On February 1 total holdings were 102,431,000 pounds, compared with 118,154,000 pounds for the previous year, and a February 1 5-year average of 121,883,000 pounds. It is apparent that the peak of holdings has already been reached, as steady out movement is now occurring and at a satisfactory rate. Dressing operations in the country plants are reported as practically over for the season, which, with present light storage holdings and reported light fresh dressed stocks, indicate a continuance of the present firm poultry market situation.

C. E. ECKLES,
Division of Dairy and Poultry Products, B. A. E.

THE TREND IN POULTRY PRODUCTION

Poultry products stand sixth in value among agricultural products. In spite of its importance we have had few facts until lately concerning the production end of the poultry industry. Data now in course of preparation, covering estimates of numbers, production, and value of poultry and eggs since 1924, are expected to be ready for release this spring.

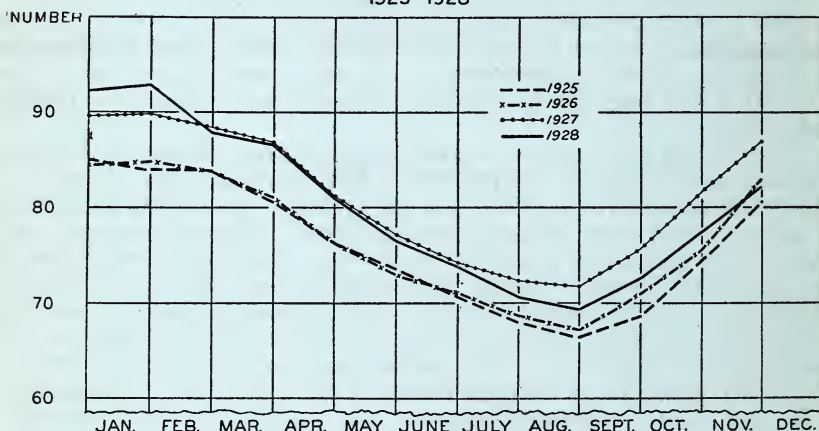
The number of chickens on hand in the United States on January 1 is estimated at about 444,000,000. This is almost four per person. Most countries have less than one per person. There was a decrease of about 4 per cent in numbers last year. Present numbers are about 6 per cent more than four years ago. Half of all the chickens are in North Central States. That great granary of our country shows the same increase over the 4-year period as does the country as a whole. Changes there are less acute than elsewhere; the loss last year was only 1 per cent. This section has the hens, it has the feeds, and it will continue as a major factor in egg and poultry production.

In the South numbers increase and decrease rather violently, according to economic conditions and the size of the corn crop. In the Southeast a bad season and a short corn crop last year wiped out practically all of the 13 per cent that had been gained during the previous three years. The South Central States have gained about 9 per cent in four years in spite of serious losses last year, and Texas has 13 per cent more than four years ago. The Western States with farm flocks mainly represented, hold 13 per cent of their gains after some losses last year, and the North Atlantic States also maintain a slight gain over the 4-year period. In the West and East a large proportion of the chickens is in commercial flocks for which we have had no definite records. During the last five years the number of eggs produced has increased slightly faster than numbers of hens. The number of chickens raised has lagged somewhat, owing to the striking reduction in young stuff in 1928 compared to 1927.

Beginning with 1880 we have some few census figures, and from these we gather that there were about as many chickens per person in the country 30 years ago, and perhaps 50 years ago, as now. While since 1900 the supply of poultry per person has tended toward a rather constant figure, numbers decreased during the war owing to the higher prices for grain and livestock.

In the general crash of prices in 1920 and 1921 the large accumulation of most products pushed prices in some cases below pre-war levels. Poultry production having been low, the prices of these held up much better. For the next few years chicken and egg prices were relatively higher than those for feed or other meat products, or than the cost of the chicken ration. The sale of poultry products saved the farm in many cases during those hard years. Numbers of chickens increased over one-fourth in three years, from a point below the ordinary supply of the country to a number considerably above it. The rapid increase in the urban population and the prosperity of the city workers absorbed these large increases, but at lessening profits. In 1924 the cold late season over much of the country, very unfavorable to poultry, with poor grain crops and rising feed prices, brought a drastic reduction of about 10 per cent in numbers of poultry. This brought them back to a point more in accord with the former trend of increase, somewhat parallel with population increases.

LAYING BIRDS IN FARM FLOCKS ON FIRST DAY OF EACH MONTH,
1925-1928

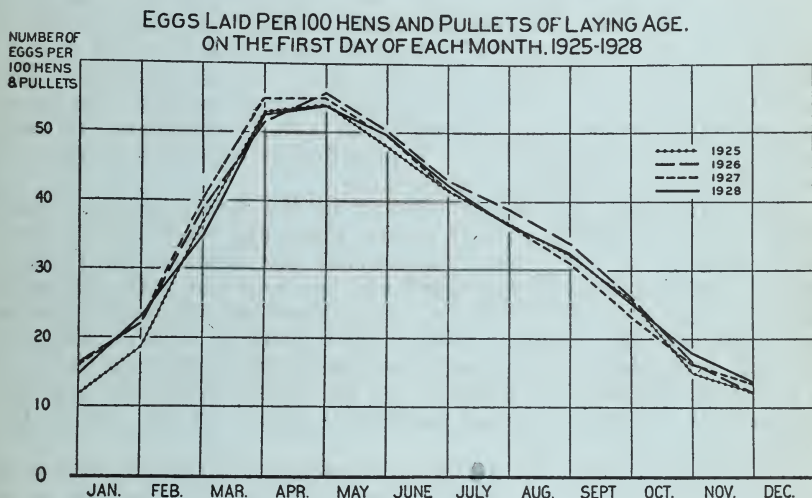


Although egg prices declined somewhat, chicken prices remained up. The ratio of egg prices to feed prices was still slightly favorable and that of chickens to feed distinctly so. Numbers increased again rather sharply, so that by January, 1928, they were up 10 per cent or almost to the high point preceding the break of 1924. By that time feed prices had risen somewhat and poultry prices were lower. During the first five months of last year layings were lighter than usual, and this fact, coupled with a keen demand for eggs for storage, maintained prices. However, the hens made up for the spring shortage by heavier layings in the fall months, and this heavier than normal late production, coupled with the marketings of heavier stocks of storage eggs in November and December, brought the farm price of eggs down until they were at the lowest points touched in those months since 1916. At January prices the ratio of egg to feed prices, which has been above 100 for eight years, stands at 91, just where it stood in January, 1920, at the end of a 7-year period during which it had run continuously below 100.

The layings per hen for January 1 were a fourth higher than the January 1 average of our 4-year record, but following the severe

weather in January the layings reported on February 1 were exactly the same as a year earlier. In view of the heavy layings up to January 1 it seems likely that the layings during the next few months will tend to be lower rather than higher than the average. Somewhat less activity in the market for storage eggs is anticipated because many dealers lost on the storage deal last year. With fewer hens and the rate of laying per hen likely to be below rather than above average, production should be less than last year unless prices should be such as to encourage heavier feeding for egg production.

Chicken prices, on the other hand, compared to egg prices, show a very favorable relation to that of feed prices, the ratio standing on January 1 at 154, almost as high as during the war years. The farm price of chicken on January 15 was precisely double the pre-war average price. The price of chicken per pound for the past four years has averaged only a little less than the price of a pound of eggs. The number of pounds of chicken produced has been equal, roughly



speaking, to about 40 per cent, and eggs 60 per cent of the combined total weight of the two. The sales of both chicken and eggs amount probably to about 60 per cent of the total production. The sales and the farm consumption of chicken are, therefore, an important part of the total income from poultry.

Present favorable prices for poultry may result in some cutting down in the size of the flocks, through the marketing of some of the less productive hens. The hatchings will of course depend largely upon the weather during the hatching and brooding period and the course of egg prices during the heavy laying and hatching period just ahead.

If our estimate of numbers, which is based upon changes in farm flocks of less than 400 birds, fairly reflects what is taking place in the industry as a whole, then the number of birds now in the laying flocks is not much in excess of the country's normal needs. There is a possibility that the increase in the number and size of the larger commercial flocks has been more rapid than allowed for, although about 600 returns from such larger flocks received with the others

and tabulated separately show about the same direction of change as in the smaller flocks.

It is certain that this element of the industry has greatly increased in numbers and importance during the past 10 years. Shipments to New York from the commercial producers on the Pacific coast are probably three times those of 10 years ago and make up over one-third of the total fresh receipts there during the fall months, when prices are highest. Increasing quantities of this western stock produced during the flush season of early spring are going into cold storage to compete during the fall with the current receipts of farm eggs from the Central and Eastern States. Many buyers prefer high-quality, cold-storage stock to ordinary run of fresh receipts at this period. While present numbers of layers do not appear to be unduly large they do appear sufficient, even if not increased by a greater expansion in numbers of commercial flocks than has been allowed for, to furnish this country with its usual supply of eggs.

Considering the difference in the price ratios of chickens and eggs to the price of feeds, the question arises whether the producers have stressed unduly the matter of egg production without quite enough thought to the possibilities of profit from sale of chickens. The increasing proportion of the laying birds in the commercial egg areas, coupled with the increasing attention to laying performance of farm hens, may have brought about a paradoxical condition of relative excess of eggs and deficiency of chickens.

The developing practice of offering in the retail market choice birds, or parts of birds, already drawn, clean and ready for the pan, gives promise of still further improving the demand for chicken meat. The high prices for beef and veal are no doubt a strengthening factor in the market for chicken at present and the influenza epidemic has stimulated the demand also, chicken being a favorite food for the sick, but chicken prices have been relatively high since the war. A moderate increase in demand for all poultry products will accompany the constant annual increase of about 1.5 per cent in the population.

While means may later be found to reduce the cost of producing eggs and chickens, for the present further increase in demand must arise mainly through the appeal of better quality. Hardly any food product is so dependent for demand upon its quality; one bad egg destroys the sale of several, while one exactly right calls for another and another. The best grades of eggs and chickens are now so attractive in appearance and quality that further advance seems difficult, but advances no doubt will be made. At least, a larger proportion of the product might be produced and marketed under conditions that would put it into the higher grades.

S. A. JONES,
Division Crop and Livestock Estimates, B. A. E.

THE FED-LAMB SITUATION

The lamb situation continues favorable for lamb feeders. Although there were about 5 per cent more lambs in commercial feeding areas on January 1 this year than last, the increase was all in the Corn Belt, most western areas showing decreases.

Marketings of sheep and lambs at public stockyards during January were 10 per cent greater than last year, 15 per cent more than the 5-year average, and the heaviest on record for January. Despite these increases in the number of lambs marketed and slaughtered, both live and dressed lamb prices advanced sharply during January. Top lamb prices at Chicago shot up about \$1.25 per 100 pounds during the first three weeks of the year and after easing off slightly toward the end of January have maintained about an even keel up to the present time. Weekly average prices for the third week in February were \$1.12 per 100 pounds higher than for the corresponding week last year. Dressed lamb prices at New York averaged about \$3 higher per 100 pounds. Receipts of sheep and lambs at 12 leading markets during the first two weeks of February were about 30,000 less than a year ago. This falling off in marketings apparently indicates two things: (1) That the Corn Belt is pretty well cleaned up and (2) that feeders are trying to distribute market supplies more evenly in an effort to maintain prices on as steady a basis as possible.

Although federally-inspected slaughter in January was about the same as last year local slaughter—which includes that of many of the smaller killers located at the various stockyards, who do not have Federal inspection—was 5 per cent greater than in 1928 and 16 per cent more than the 5-year average.

It seems highly probable that last year's campaign to educate retailers as to the best and most attractive ways to cut and trim the various portions of a lamb carcass to make them attractive to the consumer, and also to educate the housewife regarding the best ways of preparing lamb for the table, is bearing fruit. Obviously there is a stronger consumer demand for lamb this year than last. Presumably this will continue for some time to come.

Another thing which is undoubtedly contributing somewhat to the present favorable price situation is the fact that average weights of lambs are somewhat lower this year than last. This has been true throughout the winter thus far. In November, lambs slaughtered averaged $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds lighter than in November, 1927. In December they were nearly 3 pounds lighter, and in January, 1929, they averaged about 2 pounds less. This reduction in average weights exerts a double influence on prices: (1) By holding total tonnage of dressed meat available for consumption below what it would otherwise be it tends to neutralize the effect of increased marketings and slaughter, and (2) by holding average weights of carcasses, and therefore of cuts, at the point most desired by consumers it tends to increase demand and therefore to sustain prices.

But what of the outlook for the remainder of the season? Presumably lambs are pretty well out of the Corn Belt. Feeders in that area usually market early, and the heavy market receipts during the first six weeks of 1929 indicate they followed their usual custom in that regard this year. One point to which attention may be called in this connection is the fact that shipments of feeder lambs back to the country have been unusually heavy this winter. In January such shipments were 61 per cent greater than a year earlier and 22 per cent over the 5-year average. Thus far during February they have also been considerably above normal. It should be added, however, that at this season of the year feeder-lamb movements are always

insignificant compared to those of the fall, and in spite of the impressive percentage increases in such movements feeder shipments during January were only 71,000 head greater than a year earlier.

From now until the end of the season the markets of the country will have to depend chiefly on the commercial feeding areas of the West for their supplies of lamb. On February 16 there were 1,350,000 lambs left on feed in northern Colorado, the Arkansas Valley, and Scotts Bluff section of Nebraska, compared to 1,280,000 head a year ago. This was an increase of only 70,000 head.

In view of the present increased demand for lamb, the small increase in numbers still to be marketed, and the probability that lambs will continue to average lighter in weight than a year ago, it seems reasonable to anticipate something approaching a steady price level from now until the end of the fed-lamb season. The peak which usually comes in April may not occur this year, and prices may even go lower than they now are. There seems, however, to be no reason to anticipate any serious decline, and with a feeding margin of \$3 to \$4.50 on which to operate, the outlook appears unusually favorable. To be sure, the most favorable prospects can change sufficiently to make the season show a loss, but the only possibility of such an occurrence appears to consist either in a bunching of market supplies toward the end of the season or the feeders holding their lambs so long that they become too heavy for the consuming trade, or both.

Reports from California indicate a good crop of spring lambs. It was reported some time ago that 200,000 head had been contracted for at $12\frac{1}{2}$ to $13\frac{1}{2}$ cents per pound, f. o. b. ranch. The first of the California lambs usually come east in time for the Easter market, but the peak of this movement usually comes early in May. The fed lambs should be out of the way by that time.

On the whole, therefore, about the only thing needed to insure the lamb feeder a good profit on his operations this year appears to be a steady hand on the throttle which controls the marketward movement.

C. E. GIBBONS,
Division of Livestock, Meats, and Wool, B. A. E.

THE FEBRUARY WHEAT MARKET SITUATION

Cash wheat prices generally well above December levels, and higher than at any time since the decline of last July and August, are attributed largely to the rapid disappearance into consuming channels of this season's large supply of wheat. Possibility of damage to the domestic winter wheat crop, acreage of which was reduced nearly 9 per cent from the 1927 sowings, together with the sharp advance in corn prices during January, were also strengthening factors in the American wheat market. World shipments of wheat during the first half of the current season exceeded all previous records for corresponding periods, but supplies still available, including those in the Southern Hemisphere, appear to be materially larger than in any recent year. The relatively low prices now prevailing, however, together with high costs of feed grains in Europe and the increased demand for wheat from ex-European countries, suggest continued heavy takings by importing countries during the remainder of the season.

World shipments of wheat and flour from July through December totaled over 430,000,000 bushels, exceeding previous record shipments for that period, made in 1927, by more than 60,000,000 bushels. The largest annual shipments for any season, July 1 to June 30, occurred in 1926-27, when more than 800,000,000 bushels were shipped, with about 461,000,000 bushels of this amount moving out during the last half of the crop year, January to June, 1927, and constituting a new high record for that six months' period. These large shipments resulted partly from the restriction of shipping and high freight rates which had prevailed earlier in the crop year as a result of the British coal strike.

North America, as usual, has supplied the bulk of the world shipments this season. Official net exports of wheat and flour from the United States and Canada for the period July through December, 1928, totaled approximately 369,000,000 bushels, compared to 329,000,000 bushels for the corresponding period in 1927. United States exports decreased nearly 58,000,000 bushels, but these were more than offset by an increase in Canadian exports, which were over 100,000,000 bushels larger than during the previous year. These net exports, however, are materially larger than actual overseas shipments from North America and should not be confused with the official clearance figures, which show the amount of grain actually leaving the continent. Canadian export figures include shipments of Canadian grain from the head of the lakes to United States lake or seaboard ports, where it may remain in storage for a considerable time before being shipped abroad.

United States net exports of wheat, including flour, from the 1st of July through December totaled 90,485,000 bushels, compared to 147,934,000 bushels shipped out during the corresponding period last season. Some of the United States exports move through Canadian ports, but the limited storage space at those points prevents any material accumulation of United States wheat, and this grain moves forward almost directly for overseas shipment.

Canadian exports of wheat, including flour, from August 1 to January 1, totaled about 243,000,000 bushels, as against 162,000,000 bushels for the corresponding period last season. A good portion of this increase in shipments, however, may have been of old-crop wheat, a record quantity of which, amounting to over 76,000,000 bushels, was carried forward into the new crop year, August 1. Exports of wheat during August and September, most of which was probably old wheat, totaled around 52,000,000 bushels, as against only 26,000,000 bushels during the corresponding months in 1927, and practically accounted for the increase in carry-over. Total exports of wheat alone, from Canada for the period August through December, amounted to 220,000,000 bushels, compared to 143,000,000 bushels for the corresponding period of 1927. Actual overseas shipments during this period totaled only 142,000,000 bushels, as against 96,000,000 bushels shipped in 1927. The difference between these export and shipment figures is represented in the increase in the quantity of grain in transit to, or in store at, United States points. The heavy movement from the head of the lakes this season is shown in shipments of around 216,000,000 bushels of wheat from August 1 to the close of navigation, as against 153,000,000 bushels for the corresponding period in 1927. Of this season's movement, 117,000,000

bushels were destined for United States points, as against 83,000,000 bushels shipped to the United States from August 1 to the close of navigation in 1927. Reshipments of Canadian wheat from Buffalo to Montreal during the period August 1 to the close of navigation, 1928, amounted to nearly 24,000,000 bushels, compared to around 19,000,000 bushels for the corresponding period in 1927.

Southern Hemisphere shipments during the last half of 1928 were also materially larger than during the corresponding period of the previous year. Exports of wheat and flour from Argentina for this period totaled around 63,000,000 bushels, according to official estimates, compared to about 40,000,000 bushels for the corresponding months of 1927. Australian shipments during the same period were nearly 30,000,000 bushels, against 23,000,000 bushels in 1927.

Shipments to date from other surplus areas, including European countries of the Lower Danube, while of relatively little importance, have been slightly below those of last season. No shipments have been reported from Russia so far this season, and only a few thousand bushels have been shipped from India since the 1st of July.

World stocks large.—Despite the rapid disappearance of this season's wheat supply, unusually large stocks were still available in the principal exporting countries at the 1st of January. Production estimates for some countries have been revised during the past quarter, but there has been but little change in the total. World production for the 1928-29 crop year, outside of Russia and China, according to official and trade estimates, is around 220,000,000 bushels above that of the previous year. The Canadian crop is now placed at 533,572,000 bushels, an increase of nearly 34,000,000 bushels over earlier estimates. This increase, however, has been offset by a reduction in the outturn figures for the crop in Spain, according to trade reports.

The outturn in the Southern Hemisphere is still indefinite, since no official estimate of the Argentine crop has yet been released. From the best information available from private sources in Argentina, it appears that the harvest in that country may total around 310,000,000 to 320,000,000 bushels, giving a total production for the Southern Hemisphere around 110,000,000 bushels larger than last season's harvest. If these estimates are realized, about 340,000,000 bushels of wheat will be available for export from Australia and Argentina this season, compared to 287,000,000 bushels shipped out during 1928.

The amount of wheat in North America January 1 available for overseas shipment, or for carry-over, was about 125,000,000 bushels larger than a year ago, assuming domestic requirements in the United States and Canada about the same as last season. The combined harvests in these countries totaled approximately 1,436,000,000 bushels, a record production, and with the relatively large carry-over gave a total supply of 1,599,000,000 bushels. Allowing 800,000,000 bushels for domestic requirements for food, feed, seed, and the usual amount wasted, about 797,000,000 bushels were available for export and carry-over at the beginning of their respective crop seasons. Deducting North American overseas shipments of wheat and flour to January 1 this season and allowing for a carry-over equal to that of last season, there remained approximately 385,000,000 bushels available for shipment from North America during the remainder of the crop year, compared to 260,000,000 bushels January 1, 1928.

A larger percentage than usual of the North American wheat stocks apparently were in trade channels at the 1st of January. Nearly 145,000,000 bushels of United States wheat were in store in domestic markets and about 6,000,000 bushels at Canadian points on that date, while merchant mill stocks totaled slightly over 97,000,000 bushels, making a total of around 248,000,000 bushels, compared to about 175,000,000 bushels in these positions January 1, 1928. No figures are available for country mill and elevator stocks, but it is not likely that there is a deficiency in the amounts of wheat in these positions sufficient to offset the increase in the market and mill stocks.

Canadian stocks of grain in country and terminal elevators and in store in United States markets and eastern Canadian points totaled over 229,000,000 bushels at the 1st of January, compared to 159,000,000 bushels a year ago.

Stocks of wheat on ocean passage at the 1st of January were reported at 54,000,000 bushels, compared to 46,000,000 bushels a year ago.

(From reports of this bureau, February, 1929.)

SEED SUPPLIES AND PRICES THIS SPRING

Some three months ago the writer mentioned that the 1928 seed crops, in general, were below normal, and in some cases much below the good crops of the previous year, and suggested that prices this spring for most kinds of seeds would be higher than last spring. The fact that this has come to pass is not good news to those who have to buy much seed.

In the outlook report of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, issued the last of January, a general increase in the acreage of red and alsike clover for seed and an increase of alfalfa for seed in central and northern producing districts were recommended. On the other hand, a curtailment of the acreage of sweet clover for seed was urged.

Production of *red clover* seed, although one-third smaller than the relatively large 1927 crop, was larger than the below-normal crops in the previous four years. Augmented by imports that have greatly exceeded those of last year, supplies available for sowing this spring are expected to be ample. Prices for domestic seed are about 2 cents a pound higher than those of last year and than the 5-year (1923-1927) average. Prices for imported seed are about 5 cents a pound lower than last year and about 9 cents a pound lower than domestic seed.

Alsike clover seed production in 1928 was the smallest in seven or more years. The Canadian crop was also smaller, and considerably less seed of good quality has been available for export from that country. Prevailing prices are about $4\frac{1}{2}$ cents a pound higher than last year and nearly 10 cents a pound above the average for the previous five years, and may curtail the demand.

Although stocks of *sweet clover* seed are more than ample, the quantity remaining after spring requirements have been met is expected to be smaller than the carry-over in recent years. The 1928 crop was considerably smaller than the 1927 crop. However, had it not been for unusually bad weather at and after harvest last fall in several of the most important producing districts, there would now be available

enough seed to take care of this year's requirements and a considerable portion of next year's. Prices at leading markets are about one-fourth of 1 cent a pound lower than last year and $4\frac{1}{2}$ cents lower than the 5-year average.

Alfalfa seed production in 1928 was about 40 per cent smaller than in 1927, and imports have been much below normal. Present supplies of domestic seed are the smallest in several years. Because of relatively small stocks of seed from certain central and northern producing States, it behooves the buyer to be more careful than ever in his purchase of alfalfa seed. With a spread of more than 10 cents a pound in the price of seed from different States, the temptation to substitute one origin for another will be greater than usual. If Grimm alfalfa is desired, State certified seed is recommended; but if common alfalfa seed is wanted, United States verified origin seed of the origin (i. e., locality of production) recommended by the State experiment station or Federal Department of Agriculture should be bought and the buyer should see that a verified-origin seed certificate tag is attached to every bag. In the principal markets alfalfa seed prices are about 4 cents a pound higher than last year and $5\frac{1}{2}$ cents a pound higher than the 5-year average.

The supply of *timothy* seed is about the same as a year ago, the carry-over from the relatively large 1927 crop offsetting the small crop in 1928. Exports for 1928, amounting to 12,250,000 pounds, were about 4,500,000 pounds smaller than the year before and nearly 3,500,000 pounds below the 5-year average. Prevailing prices are about $2\frac{1}{4}$ cents a pound higher than last year, which were the lowest on record, but about one-half of 1 cent a pound lower than the 5-year average.

Redtop seed supplies are ample to take care of the increased demand that may result from the relatively low prices for this seed, compared to that of other grasses. Prevailing prices are about $3\frac{1}{2}$ cents a pound lower than the 5-year average but $2\frac{3}{4}$ cents higher than the unusually low prices of last year.

Kentucky bluegrass stocks are expected to be adequate, notwithstanding the fact that the 1928 crop was the smallest in 11 years. The deficit from this crop, however, is offset in part by the large carry-over from previous crops. Prevailing high prices, $10\frac{1}{2}$ cents a pound higher than last year and $2\frac{1}{2}$ cents above the 5-year average, are expected to curtail the demand.

Orchard grass seed supplies are believed ample to take care of the spring demand. Imports of this seed during January were the largest in 12 or more years. Prices quoted in leading markets are about three-fourths of 1 cent a pound lower than last year, but $1\frac{1}{2}$ cents higher than the 5-year average.

Supplies of soybeans are a little larger than last year, but those of other late forage crops such as cowpeas, millet, Sudan grass, and forage sorghums are smaller. Prices for most of these are higher than a year ago.

In conclusion, let me remind you not to delay your purchases of seed until the last minute. Remember that the quality of the seedsmen's stocks early in the season is better than later. In seeds, as in many other things, the best is usually the cheapest. The real cream of the seed crop is generally comparatively small and sold out long before the planting season is over. Furthermore, it is good practice

to send a sample of the seed you purchase to your State experiment station or agricultural college for purity and germination tests. Waiting until the last minute to buy precludes this procedure but nevertheless does not affect the soundness of the advice. Much money could be saved by the farmer in intelligent seed purchases which might lead, though the buying and planting of better seed, to larger returns from increased production on a smaller acreage.

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TRENDS IN TRUCK CROPS AND MARKETS

The American people like vegetables—and they appear to like them better each year. Increases in the acreage and production of truck crops can not be explained entirely by the annual gain of fully 1,500,000 in population of the United States. The appetite for vegetables seems to be growing, both because of encouragement from health authorities and because it is now possible to have a wide variety of fresh vegetables the year round.

Not only is there a vast volume of truck crops hauled to city markets from adjacent farms by motor vehicles and other conveyances, but the car-lot movement by rail has shown wonderful development during the past dozen years. In 1918 about 145,000 cars of 17 leading truck crops were reported to the United States Department of Agriculture. Last year shipments of the same products filled 350,000 cars, or more than double the movement of 10 years ago. This is not counting important field crops such as potatoes and sweet potatoes; neither does it include the bulk of green produce taken by the canning factories. In other words, while the population increased about 15 per cent, car-lot forwardings of vegetables increased 140 per cent. Gains have been especially noticeable for lettuce, green peas, spinach, string beans, celery, and cucumbers. Shipments of lettuce are now seven times as great as they were 10 years ago, and range between 40,000 and 50,000 cars annually. Lettuce has become the leading vegetable next to potatoes, so far as car-lot movement is concerned.

The combined commercial plantings of 18 truck crops, grown particularly for shipment fresh, were slightly less than 1,500,000 acres in 1926, but increased to 1,775,000 acres last year. Greatest gains during this period were in the acreage of strawberries, lettuce, peas, tomatoes, spinach, early potatoes, beans, and asparagus. Some of the staple crops, like cabbage and onions, have shown very little change except occasional reductions in particular regions, such as occurred in eastern cabbage and onions this winter. It is apparent that there is some danger of overdoing the matter and bringing on a spell of ruinously low prices, when it comes to planting vegetables, for the combined farm value of these 18 crops last season was \$280,000,000, compared to \$307,000,000 the year before. Caution is necessary, therefore, and any farmer who is considering further increases of acreage should first take into account the market demands and consumption and the possible gains of production in competing districts. There is a rather definite limit to the consumptive demand for some vegetables, especially the staple crops like potatoes, onions, and cabbage.

Farmers growing vegetables primarily for canning or manufacture will do well to consider the annual upward trend in plantings of such crops and the increasing competition of fresh vegetables the year round. From 1926 to 1928 there was a consistent gain in acreage of all vegetables for manufacture, except corn, cucumbers, peas, and tomatoes. Fluctuations occurred in these four crops, depending largely on the financial success or failure of the preceding season and on the annual carry-over of the canned products. Plantings last year were considerably increased over those of 1927 but were not equal to the totals for 1926. String beans for canning have shown a more rapid gain than any other crop in the past few years. About 937,000 acres of vegetables were grown for canning or manufacture during 1928, and the estimated farm value of these crops amounted to \$46,000,000.

Winter vegetables for immediate table use are now moving in rather heavy volume from Florida, Louisiana, Texas, Arizona, and southern California. Imported stock is arriving actively from Cuba, the Bahamas, Bermuda, and the west coast of Mexico. All these receipts of fresh green stuff supplement the arrivals of old stock from northern and western storage and appeal strongly to the jaded appetite of the consuming public. Anyone who can afford it is usually willing to pay a little more for fresh-grown vegetables.

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